



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



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Marine Corps legend Gen. Victor Krulak dies at 95

By Blanca Gonzalez (Contact) Union-Tribune Staff Writer
December 31, 2008

Lt. Gen. Victor H. "Brute" Krulak, shown during the Vietnam War, at one time commanded all Marine Corps forces in the Pacific. (Union-Tribune file photo) -

He entered the U.S. Naval Academy as an undersized teenager, but Victor H. "Brute" Krulak rose to command all Marine Corps forces in the Pacific, helped develop a boat crucial to amphibious landings during World War II and spoke his mind in disagreeing with a president over Vietnam War strategy.

Lt. Gen. Krulak, a decorated veteran of three wars, died of natural causes late Monday night at the Wesley Palms Retirement Community in San Diego. He was 95.

Standing barely 5 feet 5 inches tall, he was jokingly nicknamed Brute by his academy classmates. The moniker stuck, reinforced by his direct, no-nonsense style.

"There was nothing undersized about his brain," Time magazine later said.

As a major in the years before World War II, the senior Gen. Krulak helped create the amphibious-war doctrine that the Marines used to defeat Japan in the Pacific. He championed the Higgins boat landing craft that was involved in every World War II amphibious assault, as well as the prototype for the Amtrack vehicle still used by Marines today.



While commanding more than 100,000 Marines in the Pacific from 1964 to 1968, he took part in a critical stage of the U.S. buildup of forces in Vietnam.

Staff writers Steve Liewer and Rick Rogers, librarian Denise Davidson and former staff writer Jack Williams contributed to this report.

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER
PDD AL CAVALLO
917-299-5232

Membership Information Changes

Mike Bolenbaugh
m.bolenbough@gmail.com

Mike Burnett
USMCTankerM48@aol.com

Dick Carey
44 Water Street
Sandwich, MA 02563
No phone yet
Rdcarey46@yahoo.com

Fred Cruz
7437 Timberock Road
Falls Church, VA 22043

Joe Drysdale
Cdrysdales2@yahoo.com

Carl Fleischmann
cfleisch@embarqmail.com

Malcolm Garland
mgarland@soundbanking.com

Glen Hutchinson
Tiger54831@yahoo.com

Wes "Tiny" Kilgore
GySgtUSMCE7@verizon.net

Tom Tuck
tuckent@hughes.net

Letter from the President

Happy New Year! And let's hope that it is much happier than last year. At least for me, 2008 was not a banner year for much of anything. I am hopeful that 2009 will not only be our sixth biennial reunion year in Charleston, SC, but also a year for renewal and reflection. Heaven knows that many of us who thought about retirement in the next few years may have to put that on the back burner until our investments come back out of the red.

Speaking of the Charleston reunion, I'd like for any member who is attending to make sure that you (a) bring your old Vietnam photos put up in an album for the rest of the attendees to enjoy, (b) bring many donations for the fund raising auction and (c) bring your guests who may want to attend. I have seen some amazing bonding going on between VTA members and their sons or daughters who attend together. The old man may not talk about his time in Vietnam but his buddies will fill Junior's ear!!!

As most of you know this past October the VTA Board of Directors met for our annual meeting to work on positive changes for the organization as well as hammer out solutions to any impending problems that we may have encountered in the past year. One concern that we discussed was membership recruitment. If anyone has a qualified Vietnam Marine that is not a member, he should contact any board member or Robbie Robinson and we'll have a recruitment package (with a sample of the Sponson Box and a membership application) to be mailed to the prospective member. Also in order to keep finding new members and building the membership roster we enacted a Membership Recruiting Contest that was announced in the last issue of the Sponson Box. The VTA member in good standing who recruits the most members from December 2008 to July 1, 2009, will have his reunion registration fee paid by the association. Between the enhanced Sponson Box news magazine and a consistently improved VTA website, we are hopeful that these will entice more Vietnam Marines to join the brotherhood. I am pleased to announce that Fred Kellogg and Richard "Rick" Lewis have become directors on the board.

**YOUR 2009 \$30 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES WERE PAYABLE THIS PAST JANUARY!!!
Please mail them to John Wear today!!!**

A very big thank you goes out to all of the VTA members who selflessly reached in their trouser pockets and mailed in donations in the form of gift membership subscription for those qualified Vietnam Marines who for various economic reasons cannot afford to maintain their dues payments. We have anonymously identified several of these men who are now members. If you know of others who may need our help please contact any member of the board of directors and pass the word. We would like to find more deserving Vietnam Marines to help.

Semper Fi

John

I don't know who this is attributable to, but it goes something like this:
"It's not so much that the Marine Corps builds extraordinary men.
It's more likely that extraordinary men are drawn to become Marines."

Board of Directors 2007–2009

John Wear, *President*

5537 Lower Mountain Road; New Hope, PA 18938
(215) 794-9052 · E-mail: Johnwear@comcast.net

Robert ‘Bob’ Peavey, *Vice President*

304 Abbey Court; Canton, GA 30115
770-365-3711 · Email: repv@comcast.net

Jim Coan, *Treasurer*

5374 East Lantana Drive; Sierra Vista, AZ 85650
(520) 378-9659 · E-mail: zzjimco@aol.com

Ronald C. Knight, *Secretary*

720 Quail Run Court; Alpharetta, GA 30005-8920
(707) 623-9237 · E-mail: rcknight@mindspring.com

Lt. General Martin R. Steele, USMC (Ret.), *Director*

16331 Ashington Park Drive; Tampa, FL 33647
E-mail: MRSteele@aol.com

Carl Fleischman, *Director*

P.O. Box 727; Keyport, WA 98345-0727
(360) 779-1327 · E-mail: gfleisch@sinclair.net

Dave “Doc” Forsythe, *Director*

PO Box 52; Lackawaxen, PA 18435-0052
(570) 685-2020 · E-mail: docnomo2@yahoo.com

Fred Kellogg, *Director*

15013 NE 16th St.; Vancouver, WA 98684-3605
360-609-3404 E-mail: kelloggf@comcast.net

Rick Lewis, *Director*

5663 Balboa Ave. #366; San Diego, CA 92111-2795
858-297-8909 E-mail: ricklent@aol.com

Lt Col Raymond Stewart, USMC (ret) – *President*
Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation

707 SW 350th Court; Federal Way, WA 98023
(253) 835-9083 · Email: usmrvthf@comcast.net

Committees & Chairmen

Mike Burnett

Awards & Medals
209-383-2261 PST

Bruce “Boston” Manns

Association Archives
603-448-3305 EST

CW04 Bob Embesi

CRCS/CR Representative
406-821-3075 MST

Lt. Col. Harris Himes

Chaplain
406-375-0097 CST

Terry “Bo” Bocchino

Chaplain, Asst.
518-537-2509 EST

Bob Peavey

Fallen Heroes
770-365-3711 EST

Jim Guffe

Jerry Clark Memorial Buddy Fund
804-744-1179 EST

“Robbie” Robinson

National Recruiter
usmctanker65@peoplepc.com

“Pappy” Reynolds

Web Master
626-574-0094 PST

Web Site: www.usmrvta.org ~bravo3rd@earthlink.net

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Robert Peavey - Editor/Publisher
E-mail: johnwear@comcast.net



ON THE COVER: After a long fire mission on Operation Eagle Flight, L/Cpl Gerry M. Burrell, the driver of A-24, 1st Tanks, takes a smoke break on Hill 163. Corporal Harvey “Robbie” Robinson, the gunner, is on the right. Hill 163 is east of Phu Bai near the river. Note all the shell casings on the armor plate
Photo taken by then Sgt. Robert Embesi, 1966.

New Member

Jimmy J Balkcom

205 SW Koonville Avenue
Lake City, FL 32024

Phone: (386-752-8336
Email: JJB32055@aol.com

B Co, 3rd Tank Bn – 69
MOS: 1811 / 9999

Wife: Marsha

DOB: 7/13/45

Recruited by: Website

Frank K Carr

850 Wiscasset Road
Pittston, ME 04345

Phone: (207) 582-1609

C Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘68 – ‘69

MOS: 1811

Wife: Kathleen

DOB: 9/9/49

Recruited by: Website

Louis E Cherico

308 Battle Avenue
White Plains, NY 10606

Phone: (914) 948-2299

Email: louischerico@chericolaw.com

C Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘67

MOS: 0302 / 1802

DOB: 2/11/41

Recruited by: Al Hubbard

Ronald V Davidson

3544 Howlett Road
Paw Paw, IL 61354

Phone: (815) 627-9150
Email: Ron@VIPProducts.net

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66 – ‘67
MOS: 1811

Wife: Sharon

DOB: 5/13/46

Recruited by: John Wear

James E Fischer

13880 SE 86th Circle
Summerfield, FL 34491

Phone: (352)245-1570

Email: Fischer27@embarqmail.com

A Co, 3rd Tank Bn – ‘66 - ‘67

MOS: 1811

DOB: 11/29/46

Recruited by: Robbie Robinson

Rodney A Henderson

2044 Parkwood Drive
Johnstown, CO 80534

Phone: (970) 587-9743

Email: GJOBROD@aol.com

A Co, 3rd Tank Bn – ‘66

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66 – ‘67

MOS: 1802

Wife: Doris Leigh

DOB: 4/3/42

Recruited by: Tim Hackett

Roger D Hogue

273 Thompson Avenue
Chatsworth, CA 91311

Phone: (818) 715-0466

Email: lhgueroger@att.net

A Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘67 – ‘68

MOS: 2533

Wife: Shelley

DOB: 10/28/46

Recruited by: John Wear

Stanley W Olenjack

184 N Douglas Avenue
Bradley, IL 60915-1716

Phone: (815) 933-0163
Email: swbojack@sbcglobal.net

H&S Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66 – ‘67

MOS: 1811

Wife: Vicki

DOB: 3/13/46

Recruited by: Ron Davidson

George G Palmer

1345 Picket Street

Charleston, SC 29412

Phone: (843) 795-8358

Email: GGMCM8@aol.com

H&S Co, 3rd Tank Bn – ‘68 – ‘69

MOS: 9999 / 3041

Wife: Marjory

DOB: 7/21/33

Recruited by: John Wear

James A Roberts (Old renewal)

PO Box 473

Cranbrook, BC, V1C – 4H9, Canada

(250) 426-2857

Email: JSRoberts@cyberlink.bc.ca

H&S Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘65 – ‘66

MOS: 3500

Wife: Sharon

DOB: 7/13/46

Recruited by: Tom Snyder

George S Shaw

6344 Ponderosa Way
Foresthill, CA 95631

Phone: (530) 367-2053

Email: cats@fctnet.net

Bravo Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66 – ‘67

MOS: 1811

Wife: Dede

DOB: 4/6/46

Recruited by: Website

Michael S Shaw

6 Egret Cove

Camden, SC 29020

Phone: (803) 432-6473

Email: shaw288454@bellsouth.net

H&S Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘67

MOS: 1811

Wife: Charlene

DOB: 5/6/46

Recruited by: Website

Paul R Tate

1687 Meadowdale Road
Rock Hill, SC 29732

Phone: (803) 366-4254

Email: tate1369@hotmail.com

B Co, 1st Tank Bn – ‘66

MOS: 1811

Wife: Janice

DOB: 2/11/47

Recruited by: Ron Davidson

Meet Your Board of Directors

A feature that provides some history about one of your Board members.

Fred Kellogg



Cuba and when everything was secured we headed out. Once clear of the breakwater and reaching the open sea the ship began to pitch and roll in all sorts of directions. Because they are a shallow draft ship and somewhat flexible I immediately became seasick and stayed that way until we reached Cuba. Six months later I repeated the whole process when we returned to Lejeune. Never again did I want to spend that much time on a WW2 landing ship. Unfortunately the Marine Corps has a sense of humor and less than a year later I was again sent to Cuba on a LST. But this time, a few weeks before our rotation date I volunteered for Vietnam so I could fly back to the states on a C130.

I arrived at Da Nang for processing and saw my first helicopter shot down before I had even entered one of the buildings. The helicopter was spinning out of control as if it had lost its tail rotor and it crashed somewhere out of my sight. Suddenly suffering on the LST didn’t seem such a bad deal after all. After processing I was assigned to Bravo Company 3rd Tank Battalion, Camp Carroll, South Vietnam. I remained with Bravo Company until I was medevac’d out of country after being seriously wounded in a battle just outside the Khe Sanh Combat Base May 19, 1968.

When my enlistment ended I returned home and went to college under the GI Bill. While still in

school I was hired by the Clark County Sheriff’s Office (Clark County, Washington) and I remained with them for 27 years. During that time I helped form their first SWAT team and remained one of the team leaders for more than 20 years.

Immediately after retiring from the Sheriff’s Office I was hired nine hours later by the Portland Police Bureau in Portland, Oregon. After five years I was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the gang infested area of NE Precinct where I remained until retiring last March.

I currently live in Vancouver, Washington with my wife of 32 years, Rosalyn and my daughter, Hanna. Hanna has wanted to join the Marine Corps since she was about six years old and she just may do that after she graduates in 2012. My son, Fred JR, joined the Marine Corps right out of high school and served in Iraq as a crewman/ commander in an LAV. An LAV is the Marine Corps version of the Army’s Stryker – kind of like a tank on wheels. After leaving the Marines he, too, used the GI Bill to attend college and went into law enforcement. He is currently a sergeant and firearms instructor for the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office in the state of Oregon. ♦

Letter to the Editor

I got the Vietnam CD in the mail today and I watched it tonight. I must say that Tom Snyder (who produced the video from his Super 8 movie film) sure brought back some pretty intense memories. The timeframe of 65 / 66 is a little before my time (mine was the end of 67 thru early 69) and Chu Lai was in the wrong area of Viet Nam... but a rice paddy is a rice paddy, jungle is jungle and the beautiful

South China Sea is the same from one end of the country to the other. The Xenon search lights that we used were more rectangular shaped. I never saw any USO-type shows. Heck! I didn't even see a "round eye" female while I was In-country except when I was medivaced and then they were officer types in nurse's uniforms at Charlie Med. I spent most of my time around Da Nang, Hoi An, Nui Kim San

My Dad passed away last week and I was at the house going through some old papers & such. I found two old photo albums that I did not know existed. I'm sending you the picture not to illustrate the handsome devil getting a promotion, but for you to look behind him. You will see the company sign and can read the company motto that Lt Tom Roberts, ("Charlie 6") gave us at the Las Vegas reunion.

Left to Right, (I'm pretty sure it is) MSgt Ryninger, Me (Doug Scrivner) getting promoted to corporal, a Lieutenant I can't remember, and Capt Merrell the CO. This was around Feb or March of 1969. Capt Merrell had just become the CO taking over from Lt. Tom Roberts (member VTA). I think it was Lt. Roberts that took the picture. At the



Dear John,
This month's "Sponson Box" was excellent, and all your authors did professional jobs. I particularly enjoyed the "Meet Your Board of Directors" page. It brought back a few memories. As I recall, I had delivered 2nd Lieutenant Tom Barry to Con Thien at least two times. Each time, he made it back to the Dong Ha Med station with serious wounds before I got back to the 3rd Tank Battalion headquarters at Gia Le Combat Base. If I recall correctly, I accompanied Lieutenant Jim Coan to

replace Lieutenant Barry because Barry had already received his second Purple Heart. I used to look for excuses to leave Gia Le, and delivering new officers to their first unit became a happy habit. It also gave me a chance to talk with supported commanders and get a feeling as to how our tankers were performing. I never had a complaint. Jim Coan had a good tour with the 3rd Tank Battalion. He too was glad to leave Gia Le! He did a commendable job as platoon leader on the Hill of Angels. I took new officers to Gio Linh, Camp Carroll,

and I don't know where else... but the CD is worth the money! Thanks!
Semper Fi,

Ralph G. Schwartz
Bravo Co, 1st Tanks

Editor's Note: You can order a copy of this video from John Wear by check for \$25.00 made out to the USMC VTA and sent to: USMC VTA, c/o John Wear, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938.

used frequently by Tom Roberts, who was, in my opinion, one of the best Marine or civilian leaders I ever had. I have enclosed a picture of the badge he gave us in Vegas.



(Cpl) Doug Scrivner
USMC 1967-1970 Semper Fi RVN 68-69
BLT 2/7 B & C Co. 1st Tanks (Zippo) 1st
Mar Div

Dong Ha, Khe Sanh, and a variety of other areas where the Tank Battalion provided support. Later, I ran into Lieutenant Barry at MCDEC Quantico, VA in 1969 where he was finishing his active duty tour as an admin officer in the Education Section. A lot of young officers and enlisted men I knew in Vietnam did not make it home. Keep up the good work with VTA. Semper Fi!

//Mac//
Bruce MacLaren
Col. USMC (Ret.)

Hey guys, been on the Stumps a couple of times this year before Dominic went back over to Iraq. Had no problem getting on base. I entered the base at the main gate on Adobe Road. The grunts on the gate (7th Marines) just asked me to state my business, give them my ID, and vehicle registration, and they asked how long I expected to be on base. I spent about 5 to 10 minutes waiting to get my pass and then moved on about my business. As you said John, RB lives a few miles West of the Stumps and I am sure he can get you on base if there is a problem, but I do not think there will be. If you do not already have a place to stay I would recommend the Motel 6 that is located on 29 Palms Hwy (State Route 62) about 2 miles from the intersection of Adobe Rd. and 29 Palms Hwy and about 5 miles from the main gate. The rooms are comfortable and

John,
I have a friend who lives nearby and he is married to a lady from Taiwan. She in-turn has a nephew who is a tanker (Captain) in the Taiwanese army and he is currently in the US studying tanker stuff at Ft Knox. Anyway, he came into town to visit and I got an invitation to spend a few hours comparing notes and sea stories. Taiwan is keeping a lot of their M60s because their roads, bridges and the like have trouble handling the M1's weight. He is studying battalion tactics etc and we had a great time talking where we have been and where we are going as tankers. What I was really surprised to hear was his telling me the Ft Knox tank school is to be

Dear Bob,
Thank you for another great issue of the Sponson Box (September thru December, 2008). The cover photograph entitled "The Introduction", reminded me of my visit to the Traveling Wall in 1986. My twelve year old daughter, Susan, asked me to take her to see the Traveling Wall which was visiting Melbourne, Florida in August 1986. After I made a lame excuse not to go, she said, "okay, I'll ride my bike". Since it was a ten mile trip to Wickham Park in Melbourne, that included going over a causeway, I decided to take her. Needless to say, it was worth the trip. I spoke with other veterans; shared some stories about names that I recognized

clean, and the price is reasonable (\$50.00 a night). The Motel 6 is located just a few miles from the main gate. When you get onto the base note all of the tracked vehicles to your left, about the 2nd or 3rd on your left will be an M48A3. There are several other vehicles along the road. As you reach the first intersection make a left. A few hundred yards down the road on your left you'll see an Ontos (see attached) an M60 tank and a self propelled arty. Continue a few more blocks and off to your right you should see the Tank Ramp where 1st Tanks keeps their M1A1s. HQ. 1st Tanks is also off to your right about a block before

closed in the future and everything moved to Ft Benning. Also I was amazed about what he had to say about the US military. He has all of the respect in the world for our military and he said the US Army knows how to fight its tanks. But he went on the say the Army is too soft, too touchy-feely etc. But the United States Marine tankers... they are serious, fight hard and anyone who doesn't respect the Marines is going to get their butt kicked. Pretty cool statement from a Taiwanese Captain. I also asked about his future plans. He has been in the military for six years and will most likely be promoted very soon. However after that promotion anything up the ladder

with Susan and stenciled the names of my cousin, Coleman J. Kane (KIA 1966) and my USMC Basic School roommate, Terry Penseneau, (KIA 1967). I still have those stenciled names in a photo album that includes pictures from my tour in Vietnam. I encourage all Vietnam Veterans to visit the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC or the Vietnam Traveling Wall. It was an emotional and cleansing experience for me. Also, in the Letters to the Editor Section of the latest Sponson Box, John Wear described his wonderful conversation with Henry Hicks. Similar to John's experience, on September 27, 2008, I had lunch with Claude Vargo, new USMC VTA member

the ramp. You may be able to see the HQ from the road. It has an M4 next to it.
Semper Fi,
Mike "Belmo"



Editor's Note: This is the same M4 that some of us witnessed being dragged onto the Los Flores tank ramp back in late 1967. It's great to see her again.

will mean being pulled from the field and put into planning. When that happens he will resign. When I asked him why he said, "Because I will no longer be able to touch a tank. I will be taken away and stuck somewhere planning tank deployments. If I can't touch tanks or be with them in the field then there's no reason to stay in the army." OOo-Rah!! We have more snow on the ground in Washington State right now than we've had in about 20 plus years. I wonder how Al Gore will work this into Global Warming. Merry Christmas,
Fred Kellogg

and former Tank Commander, 3rd Platoon, B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division (RVN 1967-1969). Claude and I shared stories, clarified some scuttlebutt and ploughed through over 100 pictures that we've been carrying around for 40 years. After 3 1/2 hours of war stories, we agreed that we would stay in touch and definitely pick up our conversation again, at the 2009 USMC VTA Reunion. Thanks again for publishing a first class newsletter that lives up to its goal of being the voice of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. Semper Fi.
Pete Ritch

John,
I was perusing our website when I came upon the M48A3 models. I hope that “Tula” Charlie 34 is still available! I recall this tank well as I’d crewed on it and remember Cpl Olsen its tank commander putting on the name “Tula” after he’d gone home for a 30 day leave. Some smartass decided to paint “sucks” after the name Tula, but could not spell and wrote out “scuks” instead, which was a hoot!

I’ve only recently became a member and sorely wish that I’d come on board sooner because I also learned of the passing of Gerald Holly who I knew and liked very much. We served in the same platoon and at times on the same tank.

I was on the same rat patrol as Gerry in the Marble Mountain area when we

were ambushed just outside a tiny hamlet in the middle of the night with RPGs, machineguns and everything else they had to throw at us. Both his and my tank took RPGs. Gerry, LCpl Jim Littman and Sgt Lyons got wounded in the fire fight. I was driving another tank with SSgt Alanise as tank commander. An RPG hit the right side of my tank and hit the batteries which are directly behind me, shredding the nylon cover of my flack jacket leaving the protective flack plates falling out! But I was not wounded this time.

Gerald Holly received the Bronze Star for his involvement in initiating the command to return and pick up the grunts that dove into ditches to get cover and return fire.

I read with interest Dick Peksens’ article on “How Not To Use Tanks” in the 3rd Qtr

on “Crispy Critter” that is on the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association website.

If you look you’ll see my Army Duster in the background. That was 30 April 1968 when Task Force Robbie was called out to help some ARVNs on Route 1 north of Dong Ha who were getting clobbered by the 320th NVA division.

I remember the scene in the picture vividly. The Crispy Critter was blocking the road in front of me so we had to wait until a prime mover or another tank (I don’t recall which) hauled it back to Cam Lo. I recall one of the crew of the CC flashing us the V sign as their tank was towed away. That was the first event of a day that just got worse. I believe we were a click or less out of Cam Lo Village when the Crispy Critter hit the mine.

Sponson Box as we were doing the same detail less the jeep. My story would be titled “What Were They Thinking?” This event is frozen in time for me. I returned to the exact site of the ambush in the spring of 2002 and sat beside the road reflecting on that night as I’m sure all of us who were there continue to do, no matter where we are.

Thanks for doing the great job that you and others have done in reminding us that these memories share are real. We experienced some something very unique and personal that should not be forgotten.

Semper Fi,

Frank K Carr
850 Wiscasset Road
Pittston, ME 04345
(207) 582-1609

Later that evening when Task Force Robbie was trying to fight it’s way out of the blocking force that the 320th NVA Division put up, I was about 30 meters from another Marine tank that took a direct hit from an RPG. The one tanker I saw the medics lift out of the tank was limp. I never heard how many of the 11 KIAs that day were tankers, if any. The Army didn’t loose anyone that night and I hauled one wounded grunt back to Cam Lo on the back of my Duster when we retreated.

BTW, not too much later my Duster hit a mine just north of Cam Lo. Two Marine M-48s came out from Cam Lo and towed us back (we were escorting a mine sweep that originated at Con Thien). I’m trying to locate the tankers who came to our rescue. Any idea who they might be?

Thanks

Richard Smiley
(Formerly, 1/44th Artillery, US Army)
richardsmiley@comcast.net

renewal check for 2008. Again, thanks for writing me.

Fred Goger
14 Garrett Place
Middletown, NJ 07748
Sgt RVN '65 – '67

thought it fitting that I pay the dues with that amount.

I was a “push to talk” man (MOS 2531) on Hill 34 for most of 1966. I did an extended tour with 3rd Tanks and made the move north to Hue – Phu Bai. I spent Easter Sunday 1967 laying barbed wire with the forward liaison group. I left country in the fall of 1967.

Enclosed please find my membership

Vietnamese Medals will be unavailable one day ...

Of the 78 Vietnamese medals authorized to US, Australian and other Allied troops in Vietnam only five are still manufactured today. However, within a short time these five (listed below) will no longer be manufactured because the number of men and women who served in Vietnam is shrinking fast.

AMERICANS: Of the 2,709,918 Americans who served in Vietnam, less than 850,000 are estimated to be alive today, with the youngest American Vietnam vet’s age is approximated to be 54 years old.

AUSTRALIANS: Of the 46,756 Australians who served in Vietnam, an estimated 19,500 are alive today. The youngest Australian Vietnam vet is approximately 56 years old.

Looking For

David Chester Walton, USMC

Unit was: Tank commander Vietnam

Where served: Vietnam

When served: 1966

Message is: Please contact Carol Long at 443-749-0907. Went to Marine Corps Ball Nov. 1966 at Quantico, Virginia. David was from Bangor, Maine. Approx 60 plus years

Please contact: Carol Long

Mailing address: 304 E Maple Rd

City: Linthicum State: MD Zip: 21090

Clifford Melvin Evans, USMC

Unit was: Co B, 3d TK Bn, 3d Mar Div

Where served: Quang Tri, S. Vietnam

When served: 12FEB68

Message is: I am Clifford Melvin Evans’ granddaughter. I am looking for anyone who might of known him. If you have any information that you can talk to me about that would be wonderful. I never got a chance to know him he died when my dad was 2. I am really looking for any information at all. Thank you so much.

Please contact: Andrea Morgan (Evans)

Mailing address: 1442 Water St

City, State, Zip: Springfield, OR 97477

The five Vietnamese medals still being manufactured today are the 1) Cross of Gallantry, 2) Campaign, 3) Civil Action, 4) Technical Service, and 5) Wound.

These five are still being manufactured today only because: (a) three of the five are authorized to wear on the uniform and appear on the DD-214/215, but as Vietnam vets pass away at the same rate as their WW2 fathers there will be no need to manufacture Vietnamese war medals for wear on Honor Guard duty or holiday parade attendance. And (b) for the past thirty-five years these medals were sold in US military Base and Post Exchanges to active and reserve Vietnam vets still serving in uniform. But as the last of these Vietnam vets permanently retire from service over the next two years there will be no need to manufacture Vietnamese medals for sale on military bases.

If you are in possession of a Vietnamese medal, treasure and preserve it. It is becoming a collector’s item. Do not loan it. Do not display it in an unprotected

environment. As time passes these rare and soon to be absent medals that represent one of the most challenging eras in world history... the hottest region of The Cold War... will rise in historical and monetary value. And as many Vietnam veterans are choosing to restore the time-honored ritual of having a set of their medals buried with them, even fewer Vietnamese medals will exist.

The Vietnam War remains America’s longest war. The Vietnam War’s emblems of service and sacrifice, its medals, will one day fall in the disappearing well of ancient war history...

Contact Person for this posting:

Roger Simpson,

PIO Public Information Office:

<http://www.13105320634.com>

The American War Library:

<http://www.amervets.com/>

16907 Brighton Avenue

Gardena CA 90247-5420

Phone / Fax: 1-310-532-0634

More information on Jerry Mittelstadt’s Career, as I can piece it together:

Enlisted in 1951 in Minnesota 17 years old

Korea Tanker

MCRD San Diego

Marine Barracks duty Hastings NE Naval

Weapons Depot

Married 1955

Camp Lejeune 1957 - 1958 = Med. Float

Tanker

Camp Pendleton We lived in Oceanside CA

in Apt “D” on Carnation St. I was born

in the Navy Hospital 1 Mar 1962

Recruiting Duty,

Jackson Michigan Sgt- SSgt

Vietnam Late 1966? - Late 1967? GySgt

Recruiting Duty Cedar Rapids IA

Dec 1967 - May 1969 GySgt

Recruiting Duty Des Moines IA

May 1969 - June 1971 MSgt

Retired July 1971 MSgt 37 years old

Moved to Lincoln Nebraska

Passed away April 16th 1990



Army M42 Duster crewman finds his picture on our website

Dear John,

First let me say thanks for writing. I was wondering what I might have done wrong. You see in mid-October 2005 I filled out the form for joining and enclosed check No. 631 in the amount of \$42.00.

That amount was the bounty place by the VC on the men who protected the schoolhouse in Phong Bac in 1966. I spent a few nights in the schoolyard. I

What The Heck Is a Typhoon?

BY JOHN WEAR

On the morning we were to leave for Cua Viet, Handler, the company office pogue, came by our hooch and told us that the Gunny wanted our tank down at the Dong Ha boat ramp in thirty minutes. The navy boat, an LCU (Landing Craft Utility), which is quite a bit larger than the Mike boats we had been using up till then, arrived to pick us up. Being the salty crew that we are, we didn't dismount to ground guide the tank onto the boat. I simply talked my driver, Steffo, onto the boat via the tank's intercom. If the Gunny had seen us, he would have had a cow. After backing onto the LCU without a hitch, an amtrack also came aboard. The squids raised the boat ramp and we moved into the mouth of the Cua Viet River. We heard the Navy guys talking about some really bad weather heading our way. One of the Marine amtrackers told us that it was going to be a real humdinger of a typhoon. Steffo interrupted and asked, "What the heck is a typhoon?"

The amtrack commander explained that it was the same as a hurricane back in The World only that this storm, since it formed in the Pacific Ocean, was called a 'typhoon'. We offloaded the tank on the south side of the river, again, guiding by intercom. The LCU then headed across the river to drop off the amtrack. We reported into the company office inside a nearby bunker. We were ordered to hold up for a few days to see how the typhoon played out. We tried to make a shelter using our large tarp by throwing it over the gun tube, but the wind soon had it whipping all over the place. Steffo, and my gunner, Pappy, sought shelter in a leaky canvas tent that housed supplies for the amtrack chow hall. We heated up some

C rations and then bedded down just as it started to rain in earnest.

In the middle of the night, the typhoon intensified and the wind driven rain began blowing under the billowing tent flaps. I was convinced the tent and everything underneath it was about to blow away into the pitch-black night. We tried to sleep on the wet wooden floor and soon EVERYTHING was soaked. I will swear on a stack of Bibles there wasn't a dry thing under that tent when morning broke. Thankfully we got warm chow in the amtracker's chow hall while the storm continued its fury— thank God for small favors!

All the next day the storm continued without letup. We flagged down a passing Mike boat and asked the squids to take us across the river to the north shore. But once there, we notice there was nothing in the way of a defensive perimeter in which to wait out the storm. We had been planning on heading up to 'C-4' with a large convoy of amtracks but the typhoon kept everyone buttoned up. Suddenly we get an incredulous order over the radios — they want our butts up at 'C-4' ASAP to be ready for the rumored, "invasion by the North". The rain was blowing horizontally into our faces, stinging like hell. I had to turn my face away; I couldn't imagine how Steffo could see well enough to drive!

Due to heavy NVA and Viet Cong activity in the area, the rule was to drive in the surf along the beach to avoid any antitank mines that may be lurking for a hapless convoy. As we started up the beach huge typhoon-induced waves broke over the top of the tank. I was not only soaked by the heavy wind-swept

rain, but by seawater as well. It came in torrents and flooded the bottom of the tank causing the escape hatch (under the driver's seat) to come lose. The safety wire that held the hatch's handle in a 'closed' position was broken by the tidal surges. Somewhere along the route the hatch falls into the surf never to be seen again! I looked down inside the turret and was horrified to see that water is swirling around the gunner's knees meaning my driver has to be under more water than above it! I know now that the water was coming in through the bottom of the hull with every crashing wave.

At this point we were fighting for our lives just to stay on the beach and get washed out to sea! Due to the total inundation of saltwater, our radios and the tank intercom were now useless. In fact, the only thing I could hear over the radios was a loud screaming noise and I immediately turned them off. If we hit the shit now, we would never be able to call for help! After two long hours of a miserable drive that should have taken no more than 45 minutes, we pulled into 'C-4' totally waterlogged and exhausted.

We didn't even realize we were minus the driver's escape hatch until the entire set of batteries shorted out a few days later.

John Wear
Charlie Co, 3rd Tanks
RVN '68 – '69

Tanks on the DMZ –Part III OPERATION BUFFALO



BY JIM COAN

In the aftermath of Operation Hickory, the highly successful allied invasion of the Demilitarized Zone in May, 1967, all sides seemed to be taking a breather. But as June wore down and July was coming in to view, enemy activity in the Eastern DMZ picked up again. Shelling from the DMZ increased, and several sharp firefights around Con Thien indicated that the NVA were preparing for another offensive.

Meanwhile, work progressed steadily on the barrier system. The 11th Engineers commenced widening the Trace from 200 to 600 meters in June. McNamara's Wall was becoming a reality, despite North Vietnam's best efforts to derail the project.

On 1 July, two companies from 1/9, Alpha and Bravo, were preparing to sweep through the Marketplace area 2,000 meters northeast of Con Thien. The 9th Marines CO, Col. Jerue, wanted

to foil the NVA pattern of moving into an area recently swept by the Marines, then digging in and ambushing the next Marine patrol to come by.

That night, Alpha Company set up two clicks north of Con Thien. Bravo Company crossed the Trace earlier that day and set in for the night 1,500 meters to the southeast of Alpha along Route 561, an ancient, sunken cart path that connected Cam Lo with the DMZ.

After the fiercely contested "Hill Fights" around Khe Sanh, and the bloody fighting south of Con Thien earlier that spring, many of the Bravo Company men were "newbies," green replacements who had been assigned to the "Walking Dead," fully aware of 1/9's reputation as a jinxed outfit.

The Marketplace Massacre. As the sun rose on 2 July, 1967, the tension was almost palpable as Bravo Company formed up and headed north along Route 561. Awaiting them were two fresh battalions of the 90th NVA Regiment, 324B Division.

About 0930, just as the 3d Platoon of Bravo reached the intersection of Routes 605 and 561 labeled "Marketplace" on their maps, gunfire rang out from the west. The platoon wheeled left and got on line, believing they were taking fire from an enemy squad in a trench. While two squads from 3d platoon laid down a base of fire, the third squad assaulted into what turned out to be a platoon of NVA armed with AK-47s. People wearing USMC helmets and flak jackets were shooting at the confused Marines who were yelling, "Stop shooting! We're friendlies!" Then, M-16 jamming problems began to crop up. Soon, isolated pockets of outgunned, outnumbered Marines were systematically surrounded, hit with grenades, and then overrun. Several NVA ran across the road between 2d and 3d Platoons, taking the Marines under fire from both sides of the road.

Casualties began to mount. Snipers were situated to fire down into the Marines hugging the road, picking off anyone with a radio, or anyone giving a hand signal. Machine-gun fire and RPGs fired from

hidden bunkers added to the slaughter. To make matters worse, mortars and artillery began raining down. Bravo was getting murdered.

Alpha Company was ordered to close the 1,500 meter distance between them and Bravo. Mines and booby traps slowed Alpha, but rather than stop for medevacs, they carried their casualties with them. Soon Alpha had taken thirty additional casualties from incoming mortars and was in a tight spot themselves. At Con Thien, Delta 1/9 was taking heavy incoming as they organized a tank-infantry relief force.

Two F4B Phantom II jets and two Huey gunships arrived, finally. The Phantoms roared in and unloaded their 250-and 500-pound bombs, some so close that the grunts were showered with dirt clogs. Heavy machine-gun fire hit one of the Marine Phantoms, sending it crashing into the South China Sea.

Back at the road junction, forward air controller Capt. Warren O. Keneipp, only weeks earlier an F-8 Crusader pilot with VMF-232, radioed that Bravo's CO was down, both platoon commanders were either dead or wounded, and that he was also hit. He no longer had any communication with Bravo's 2d or 3d Platoons. His last brave words to the 1/9 CP were: "I don't think I'll be talking to you again. We are being overrun."

Cavalry to the Rescue. Shortly after noon, four tanks from Bravo Company, 3d Tank Battalion, moved out from Con Thien to the Trace with a platoon of grunts from D/1/9. Commanding the tanks from Bravo, 2d Platoon, was Gy/Sgt Norman Eckler in B-25 (driver Gary Young). His platoon sergeant was S/Sgt Lemuel Sloan in B-24 (driver Morris). The other tank commanders were Sgt Dover Randolph in B-22 and Cpl James Holston, B-23 (driver Terry Hunter). This was a gritty bunch of combat veterans. Many had participated in Prairie and Hickory. They also knew this area well.

The tank/infantry force traveled out to where Route 561 intersected the Trace, then the infantry dismounted. Moving north towards the Marketplace, Eckler and Holston took their tanks to the left side of the road, Sloan and Randolph

covered the right. About a thousand meters north of the Trace, Sloan's tank hit a mine. He was stopped cold.

Mortar fire rained down on the tankers. The TC on B-22, Sgt Dover Randolph, caught a piece of shrapnel in the lower back. Crewman Jack Wilder recalled that Randolph fell to the turret deck looking stunned, "white as a sheet." Wilder put a battle dressing on the wound, then pled as earnestly as he knew how: "You're all right sarge. You gotta get back up there. You're our leader. We need you to get us outta here!" Randolph snapped out of his shock and climbed back up into the cupola, continuing to direct his tank's main gun fire towards the NVA in a treeline. Rather than exit the tank and medevac himself out of danger, Randolph stayed with his tank throughout the battle until later ordered by his platoon sergeant to get on a medevac back at the Trace.

Gunny Eckler in B-25 and Cpl Holston in B-23 continued on down the road another 200 meters past the Marketplace. What they saw was shocking. Dead Marines were lying everywhere. Forty to fifty Marines lay along both sides of the road, their weapons and gear strewn down the middle of the road for the length of the column. Eckler and Holston lay down a barrage of canister and HE, and fired thousands of rounds from their machine guns to hold the NVA at bay while several 1/9 officers and NCOs searched the area looking for wounded Marines left alive. They found dozens of men, mostly from 1st and 2d platoons, and a handful of 3d platoon survivors. Tank crewmen helped load the casualties aboard the tanks.

Enemy fire intensified as the NVA attempted to encircle the reaction force. The two tanks were loaded with all the casualties they could carry and turned around to head back south, leaving 34 dead behind. This was a heart-breaking decision. Marines don't leave their dead behind, but it had to be done to save the wounded.

At one point, L/Cpl Terry Hunter recalled a dud RPG striking the rear of Gunny Eckler's cupola. Had it not been a dud, Eckler surely would have been killed. Eckler radioed S/Sgt Sloan that Cpl Holston was coming his way and to be ready to hook up tow cables so Sloan's

mine damaged tank could be towed out. Then, less than a hundred meters from Sloan and Randolph, Holston's casualty-laden tank hit a mine, knocking some of the casualties off onto the ground. An exasperated infantry captain yelled at the tankers to leave the tank and keep moving. Gunny Eckler would not hear of it. His crewmen heard him curse, "Tell him he can hang it in his poop-snapper," as he ignored the captain and hooked up his tow cables onto Holston's tank.

Randolph hooked up his tow cables to Sloan's tank. As the tank/infantry column resumed moving south, Randolph's tank was towing Sloan's tank, and Eckler's tank was towing Holston's tank.

S/Sgt Sloan saw an RPG whiz over his head and hit Holston's vehicle in the port sponson box. Driver Terry Hunter was wounded in the back and Martin (gunner) was wounded in both legs. An RPG team located at 1100 fired another RPG. This one hit the front slope plate and ricocheted up, detonating on the open loader's hatch that Hank Brightwell had forgotten to close after he had returned from inspecting the earlier mine damage. The blast knocked Brightwell out cold. Terry Hunter recalled that Brightwell's commo helmet had shards of shrapnel protruding from it. Brightwell came to as the turret was filling with smoke. TC Holston yelled, "Bail out, the tank's on fire." Brightwell attempted to use the fire extinguisher, but a crewman had used it the day before to cool down some beer, so it was almost empty. Brightwell expended what was left in the bottle, then passed out again.

Hunter and Martin, despite their wounds, had jumped out of the tank when Holston yelled, "Fire!" They were limping alongside their towed tank when mortars began impacting nearby. Both tankers decided a smoking tank loaded with casualties was a better place to be, so they jumped back aboard. Terry Hunter recalled that Cpl Holston had pulled out his .45 from his shoulder holster and put several rounds into the NVA soldiers who had fired the last RPG at them.

The remaining withdrawal to the Trace 1,000 meters distant was like running the gauntlet from Hell. Snipers, mortars, and

artillery dogged Bravo's survivors all the way. The tanks blasted away with their canister rounds and machine-guns, preventing the NVA from moving in close enough to penetrate the column's flanks. Some of the wounded riding on the tanks were hit by bullets or shrapnel and killed. The beleaguered convoy had to fight through several ambushes. At one point, air strikes were pounding the NVA with bombs and napalm less than a hundred meters from the road. At last, Bravo and the four tanks reached the Trace about 1600.

Chaos reined at the Trace. Bravo Marines stumbled into the perimeter, exhausted, semi-delirious from the heat and no water, some going into shock with serious wounds. Corpsmen labored to sort out who was who and prepare the wounded for evacuation. What was left of Bravo Company, plus the Delta Company platoon, got the word to mount up on the

tanks and head back to Con Thien. The dead Marines were placed on the two towed tanks.

Safely back in the Con Thien perimeter, the tankers and corpsmen unstacked the dead from their tanks and laid them gently on the ground near their positions, where they would have to remain until morning. The Battalion Aid Station was overflowing with wounded men. The dead could wait. For the tankers, their ordeal was not yet over. The inescapable stench of death and charred human flesh permeated their senses all night.

At the end of that terrible day, 1/9's casualties were 53 KIA, 190 WIA, 34 MIA (33 bodies eventually found, one not recovered). Seven of those killed were Navy corpsmen. Keith W. Nolan, author of *Operation Buffalo: USMC Fight for the DMZ*, wrote that what happened to Bravo 1/9 on 2 July, 1967, was "the worst

single disaster to befall a Marine Corps rifle company during the entire Vietnam War." Only 27 men from Bravo Company walked out of that battle unscathed.

On 13 July, the remaining "Walking Dead" of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, battered and demoralized, departed for Camp Carroll to rebuild and replenish their losses. Buffalo was brief but brutal—the DMZ war in microcosm. When the last shot of Buffalo was fired, the Marines controlled not a single foot of land they had bled for, except Con Thien, and the barrier-building folly would continue.

For more on Operation Buffalo, read *Operation Buffalo: USMC Fight for the DMZ*, by Keith Nolan; and *Con Thien: The Hill of Angels*, by James Coan.

To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

Margie Gagnon, wife of Don Gagnon for 13 years passed away @ 1000 Monday 27 October from the results of several strokes that started during August, we (& the Dr) suspect she was having small strokes about once a week as her ability to communicate decreased to the point of her not talking at all. She was in a Nursing Home but was not making any progress with therapy. She was comfortable and without pain.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Don.

It's with great sorrow that I inform you of Richard (Dick) Gerszewski passing on 10-21-08. Chriswell Funeral Home of Ada, OK is in charge of arrangements. If you need any more information. Please feel free to contact me at 580-332-8924.

*Thank you,
Donna Gerszewski*

Jim Knee said that Larry Staats' wife called him to inform him that Larry passed away two nights ago (on or about 12/26/2008).

Rick Lewis informed us that Warren Suvlett had passed away several months

ago. No further information was available at this time.

The 3rd Herd of Bravo Co, 1st Tanks found our beloved "Gunny", but unfortunately, it was in the obituaries of the Alice Echo News, in Alice, TX. 1st Sgt Servando Garza (Ret), passed away on January 4, 2009. The 3rd Herd would like to sponsor his membership to "Guarding Heaven's Gate". The obituary said that Gunny Garza had done 2 tours in Vietnam. We knew him from his tour in mid '66 to mid '67. His favorite expression

was "Mighty fine, ole man", and he was indeed a "Mighty fine ole man". I served with some outstanding Gunnys, but the name I remember to this day is, Gunny Servando Garza. It's taken me over 40 years to get my butt in gear and start tracking down the 3rd Herd, and others that I served with. We were an unusual and unconventional platoon



Gunny Garza surrounded by Lt. Ron Henderson on the right and S/Sgt Murphy on the left.

PISSTUBE ENCOUNTER

BY DICK PEKSENS



I arrived in NAM in mid-1968 as a new brown-bar with a checkered record from my profligate days at Quantico where I fought tooth-and-nail against conformity with less than beneficial outcomes. I was one of three 1800 officers to arrive on the commercial flight into Da Nang after spending three days (and nights) visiting all the attractions that Camp Hanson and Okinawa had to offer. In other words, I was exhausted and hung-over.

We spent the first night in officer quarters adjacent to the Da Nang Exchange where we received the “Rules of Engagement” diatribe which essentially allowed the VC/NVA to operate along the borders of adjacent TAOR’s without fear of retribution due to the complexity of trying to co-ordinate fire missions between multiple entities including the ARVN.

The following morning, we were given our assignments. The other two 1800 officers were assigned to the 3rd Mar Div. One was given a 0300 grunt assignment and the other sent to 3rd Tanks. I was assigned just around the corner to 1st Tk Bn, which was a quick jeep ride through Dog Patch and then south along the Da Nang runways and Route 1 till we turned right at the French Bunker and climbed the hill to Battalion located directly north of the 8th Marines Artillery BN.

Upon arriving, I was told that I would

be assuming command of the 3rd Platoon of Charlie Company which had just returned

from the BLT at the Cua Viet River where Lt Parrish, the current platoon leader, had received the Silver Star. I was told that I would need to wait till the next day to receive a weapon and other combat necessities. I was then taken to a spot on the berm where I was expected to muster in the event of a rocket or sapper assault. I was also told to sleep with my boots on. Naturally, I was a bit nervous about facing an assault by drug-crazed sappers without a weapon. I had seen what happened to John Basilone at Guadalcanal and Sergeant Striker on Iwo Jima!

That night I settled into my new bunk fully dressed awaiting the imminent attack. At about 1 AM, the siren sounded and everybody began jumping out of their cots and disappearing into the murky night. Without anyone to direct my egress, I left the tent under the illumination of high-flying flares and frantically tried to get my bearings to my assigned spot on the berm. I could hear the explosions of incoming rounds (122 mm rockets) and outgoing artillery from the 8th Marines. By the time I had zigzagged to the berm, the COC bunker had already sounded the all-clear. I was now forced into the daunting task of

finding my way back to my bunk in utter darkness. My jumbled nerves had caused by bladder to overflow and I immediately started searching for a “pisstube”.

I had previously “snapped-into” the pisstube while in OCS and staging at Pendleton. I knew the standard issue pisstube to be an approximately 2 inch diameter pipe extending from a ground sump and topped by a large can with a mesh cover. A marine simply micturated into the mesh (apparently the mesh prevented the passage of calcified stones into the sump?) where the urine then leached into the ground after passing through a layer of lye which improved the ambiance of the pisstube environs. After stumbling through the dark, I spotted the pisstube which appeared to be enclosed in a wooden 3-sided shed with a roof, which obviously was useful when evacuating the bladder during monsoon conditions. As I approached with ever-increasing urgency, I noted that a circular cement platform had been constructed adjacent to the pisstube to obviously keep a senior officer’s boots

(Continued on page 28)

Qualifying

BY ROBERT PEAVEY

With each thud of the sledgehammer cheers went up from the circle of veterans as chards of concrete flew in different directions; it was a rookie “qualifying” on the tank ramp at Los Flores, home of 5th Tank Battalion; the year was 1967.

The Private, fresh out of Tank School, wielded the 20-pound hammer like a pro striking the crudely drawn bull’s-eye scratched in the ramp’s cement. He was blindfolded attempting to hit the same spot repeatedly. Cheers went up all around each time he hit the bull’s-eye. It was part of an unofficial and devious initiation performed when no staff NCOs or officers were around. It was a rite of passage into the world of Marine tankers.

Further down the ramp, hidden behind a tank, was another Private who would soon be escorted to circle of honor. The rookie was being prepped by a veteran for his coming turn. He was being told that to be accepted into the tanker family he had to hit the bull’s-eye five times with a sledgehammer. It sounded almost too easy until it was explained that he would be blindfolded, spun around a few times, and then told to take a swing.

“It is a combination of gunnery and track-tool skills,” the veteran tanker explained putting the Private’s mind at ease. The initiation process was explained and that he would be given “corrections” in mils (a gunnery unit of measure) with each hammer swing until he was on target. These corrections would be shouted out by a crowd of onlookers. It was an adult version of pin the tail on the donkey. The whole affair made sense for Tank School had stressed the importance of being able to swing a sledgehammer true; it was after all, a critical tool used by all tankers. The two skills together, gunnery and sledgehammer proficiency, seemed to make sense of the ritual. After

all, the two ideas went together like bread and butter . . . didn’t they?

The Private stood before the circle of honor. It was flanked on each side by a tank and both were loaded with veterans gazing down upon the stage. They were whooping it up, “Come on rookie! You can do it!”

He was first handed the sledgehammer, which I would later learn was the most important step of the ritual, for once given the heavy hammer, his hands would be occupied. A second veteran, standing nearby with the blindfold, would approach from behind and bring the blindfold down in front of the rookie’s face and deliberately hit the bill of the kid’s cover (hat).

“Oh, ya gotta take your cover off,” he would tell the kid.

The rookie would reach up with one free hand and take off his cover and the blindfold would be immediately fixed in place. It only took a second for the Private to realize he wouldn’t be able to swing the sledgehammer and hold his cover at the same time. The die was cast.

The Private would blindly push the hat out in front of him asking for someone to hold it for him . . . and there was always someone willing to hold it. He would be spun around three times always ending up in front of the circle. By this time the crowd would be yelling and taunting him to swing the hammer. The rookie’s first swing would naturally miss the target and corrections were called out from the crowd, “Left 10 mils!” Again the kid would swing and the crowd would bolster him on, guiding him to the center of the bull’s-eye.

“Thud!” the hammer hit again just missing the center.

“One mil right!” the crowd shouted, “You’ll be on target!”



The following thud hit dead center. The crowd went wild as pieces of concrete flew up from the center of the bull’s-eye.

“Fire for effect!” the veterans shouted indicating he was on target and to take his five swings at the same spot.

With all the catcalls and loud ruckus being made, it was no surprise the rookie never heard the noise. I barely heard it while watching the entire event unfold. It was a soft and very subtle sound, almost indiscernible to the ear. It was the rookie’s cover being dropped into the middle of the bull’s-eye.

To my surprise there was no difference in the sound of the hammer striking cover or bare concrete; the 20-pound sledge cut through the cover like it wasn’t even there. Yells went up with each swing urging the rookie to swing harder—and try he would. After the fifth swing, cheers went up and the blindfold removed. Someone would always pick up the rookie’s cover to hand it to him and tell him what a great job he did. The kid could only stare at the tattered semblance of a cover; it had been totally torn apart. The crowd laughed as it dawned on him what he had just done to his own cover. He would now have to wear it back to the barracks and get a replacement. Being caught without your cover was a charge of being out of uniform so there was no question he had to wear it back to the barracks. He had to avoid crossing paths with the battalion Sergeant Major.

But the Private wasn’t angry as one might expect for he was now accepted into the tanker family. He had qualified. ♦



Don't Miss Charleston!

Condé Nast Traveler magazine recently rated Charleston, South Carolina in the top 10 travel destinations in the U.S. for the 16th straight year and only second behind San Francisco. There are a ton of things to do in the area with wonderful sights, history, shopping and restaurants. I recommend coming in early or staying a few days later in order to enjoy all this wonderful city has to offer.

Charleston is often called the Boston of the South due to its Revolutionary War history, and how can you forget where the Civil War started? Right at the mouth of her harbor sits Fort Sumter. There are unique attractions like plantations and what plantation-life was like back in the 1700's and great fishing if you want to charter a boat. And don't forget to take the wife on a carriage tour of Charleston – it is steeped with history. Take in the architecture and old time beauty while you clip-clop through the cobblestone streets as your guide points out the historic sites. A good guide will fill you in on why all the homes sit sideways to the street instead of facing the street! A unique mystery!

Plan your 2009 vacation around this year's reunion and keep the special hotel rate when you add on extra days on either side of the reunion dates. This is probably the nicest city we have ever held a reunion in.

The reunion begins with check-in on Wednesday, August 19th and the departure date is Sunday morning, August 23rd. Our guaranteed room rate is \$99 a night which will apply three days before and three days after the actual reunion dates. The hotel is the Sheraton North Charleston, 4770 Goer Drive, North Charleston, SC 29406, (843) 747-1900.



“What is it about you Marines?”

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE BEEN ASKED THAT?

The following may help explain what we share that is so special and what we have lived that makes us remember. To understand, you have to live our experience, share what we have all shared, and feel what we have all felt. It is about Corps values, and honor. It is about character. It is about a shared experience that changed our lives.

The common experience starts with DISORIENTATION. The Corps creates a vacuum in your life. It takes away your hair, clothes, and friends, and fills it with a drill instructor. He says things like get off MY bus ... do it NOW and as you stand asshole to belly-button on the yellow footprints, your identity disappears. The D.I. gives you a short lesson on the UCMJ, and you learn that rights belong to the institution, not to the individual.

You will live in a squad bay and you will march everywhere. He speaks to you in the future imperative ... he says. YOU WILL ... and you do! He gives you a new language ... deck, hatch, head. It is a language that is steeped in a tradition you don't understand yet. He takes away your right to speak in the first person, and he takes away your first name. Your platoon number is what's important now.

Before your first meal you get 20 seconds to stow your gear, and you learn that the only way to get it done within the time limit is to help one another... The TRANSFORMATION begins. This is the culture of the Group, and its members are anonymous.

Although you don't know it, your drill instructor will become the most important person you will ever meet, and your weeks of boot camp will become the defining cultural experience of your life. For the first time in your life you encounter absolute standards of right and wrong, success and

failure. When you screw up, everyone stops, and they penalize you, immediately, so you won't forget.

Disorientation and Transformation are followed by TRAINING.

The rules are simple:

- a. Tell the truth
- b. Always do your best no matter how trivial the task
- c. Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong
- d. Don't whine or make excuses
- e. Judge others by their actions

And above all, look out for the group, before you look out for yourself. During your training you are pushed beyond your limits, and you achieve. You learn to make excellence a habit. The common denominator among you and your fellow recruits is pride and accomplishment. Through your training you develop spirit, and you develop self-discipline.

You learn the ingredients of CHARACTER: Integrity, Selflessness, and Moral Courage. And you learn the Corps Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

These are your roots. The Corps is a rigid code that will stay with you forever. It will define your character, and it will guide you for the rest of your life. This is why there are no EX-Marines.

Once you can appreciate what you are about to become, you learn about those who have gone before you. You study our history, and learn the lessons of countless heroes who acted, not for self, but for comrade, Corps, and Country. Marines are about taking care of each other, always have been, always will. It is our culture and it holds us together. As you learn the history, you become part of the tradition. You have a new appreciation of your God, your Country, and your Corps.

One final element completes your training - you become a rifleman.

The magnitude of what you have accomplished becomes apparent to you at graduation, when you finally earn your title and are called Marine.

What you know then, in your heart, but what you can't put into words, is that there is something very special about this organization that is unlike any other organization you ever have been a part of. What you can't put into words, but what you know in your heart is that the essence of the Marine Corps resides with the lowest in rank; The Marine is the Corps, and the Corps is the Marine. ... Your uniform says it all. When someone looks at you they don't see the name of your ship, a unit patch, or a branch insignia ... what they see is a MARINE. That's all that counts! You are a Marine! It is what matters to you, and it is what matters to every other Marine. You know that you may never feel this important again, and you will spend the rest of our life living the code, and holding on to the feeling that every Marine is a rifleman and that's the essence.

But there is more to our story than our boot camp experience. There is our experience of sacrifice and our participation in the history & tradition of the Corps. We share stories and tell of the humor that got us through the tough times, but we also have stories we keep to ourselves, hiding the painful memories too personal to share.

Shared experience and personal sacrifice are reasons the Marine Corps is a Band of Brothers. It is the reason we celebrate today. The feeling you have when you become a Marine lasts a lifetime. Whether you serve 3 years, or 30, your experiences will never be forgotten. You will never work as closely, or depend on others more, than you did

(Continued on page 24)

A Little Reunion in Indiana

BY BOB “LURCH” VAXTER

We were young and maybe just a bit crazy, but who wasn't in this war. It was late April, 1968, at a place called LZ Hawk. We were the crew of Charlie 31 and were temporally attached to Bravo Company. We were now the crew of Charlie 33. We bonded as only men in combat can for we had lived, sweated, laughed, fought and cried together. We were sad anytime one left for home yet at happy for him that he was getting out of here in one piece. We learned we were not as immortal as our naive youth once had us believe, especially after the death of Jimmy Jaynes.

Now, 40 years later, after weeks of computer searches and hours of long distance phone calls, the former crew of Charlie 31, Third Tanks, is getting ready for a reunion in Matthews, Indiana. Two other members of our platoon are also going to meet with us. Some have not seen each other since 1968 while some of us have been fortunate enough to have kept in touch over the years. We all looked forward to meeting in Indiana.

On September 17, 2008, we converged on the Clock Farm just outside Matthews, Indiana. Waiting for everyone is Darryl Clock, the former tank commander of Charlie 31. First to arrive is Tony Sims, once the loader on Charlie 31 followed by Garry Hall who was the tank commander of C-21 which had also been assigned to our platoon. Last to arrive is Bob Vaxter, the driver for Charlie 31 and Glenn Hutchins, loader and gunner, for Charlie 33. Missing was Tom Freeman who passed on to the Great Tank Park in The Sky in 1996; he was missed by all.



Glenn Hutchins, Gary Hall, Bob Vaxter, Tony Sims, Darryl Clock.

It seemed like 40 years had washed away in the blink of an eye. No one had to ask for names, we all recognized each other immediately. We all shook hands and everyone said, “F*ck it,” and we hugged one another. The next day and a half was spent telling war stories and looking at old pictures. We tried to get different incidents straightened out in our minds. We helped each other fill in the spaces and to try and close the missing links of our own stories.

Conversations went like this, “Hey, you remember when we threw the track and we were sure we were all going to get it? Remember how we used to swim in the river there by

Bridge 34 on Route 9? Remember the track breaking as we went down the hill towards Bridge 34 and we couldn't stop and the tank and it went right into the water? No man, that was before I joined the platoon. You FNG!”



We talk about those moments and a thousand others. Most of the stories we laughed at while at the time I am certain they weren't. It's funny how time can change one's outlook; something that was a pain in the ass 40 years ago was but a joke today. We talked in circles, carefully sidestepping the night of April 19th for as long as possible. But it couldn't be ignored for it affected all of us. When it couldn't be avoided any longer, Garry tells the story the night his tank went off the Route 9 and rolled down the steep hill after his driver, Jimmy Jaynes, was killed by a satchel charge.

We listened to Bob tell about going out that night with the grunts who had just been on the road sweep with Bravo 21 to look for their dead. We listened to Glenn who told about going out two days later to retrieve Jimmy's remains from the burned-out tank at the bottom of steep drop off. Tony and Darryl just sit and don't say anything but their eyes tell you they are remembering. We all kind of sit and stare, recalling the memories and seeing them for what they are: painful recollections of things that used to be. We sit outside



Jimmy Jaynes, KIA April 19, 2008

Darryl Clock's farmhouse talk well into the night.

Thursday morning we all go out to breakfast. We sit in a local restaurant drinking coffee and telling more funny stories. Mentally we're tired, but we feel great. We go back to the Clock Farm and say our goodbyes. We all depart with the same words, "I would not have missed this for the world and I'll see you next year in Charleston, South Carolina."

In his book *Such Good Men*, Michael Norman wrote the words that summed up our little reunion:

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They

would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades... Such good men."

And I would be remiss if I didn't thank Jenny Clock for allowing a group of old tankers, strangers all, invade her house for a couple of days. She was the best. ♦

Another Health WarningHexamine Tablets

BY BOB “BOMBER” GIBSON

Remember in Vietnam, before you discovered the cooking joys of C-4, those almost worthless tablets that you could light and cook with? Well, like everything else that we seemed to have touched, breathed or consumed in that lousy country, those little gems held a potential health problem.

The modern literature for Hexamine has warnings against inhaling the fumes emitted when the tablets are burning. However, the author of the literature was probably never in the bush trying to heat up a brew of coffee or a meal in pissing down rain sheltered under a sheet of green plastic or in a small bunker sucking in the fumes which made everyone feel crook.

I have recently been diagnosed with Small Airway Disease (SAD) the given causation was possible exposure to cigarette smoking and/or exposure to dioxins. No arguments there. I found the attached on the Web and there is a small piece regarding C4 at the end. No doubt it may be of interest to members.

C4 also has its own set of health issues but don't appear to be as bad as Hexamine.

HAZARD SUMMARY

- Hexamine can affect you when breathed in.
- Hexamine may cause mutations. Handle with extreme caution.
- Contact can cause skin and eye irritation.
- Breathing Hexamine can irritate the nose and throat causing coughing and wheezing.
- Hexamine may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain.
- Hexamine may cause a skin allergy. If allergy develops, very low future exposure can cause itching and a skin rash.
- Hexamine may cause an asthma-like allergy. Future exposure can cause asthma attacks with shortness of breath, wheezing, cough, and/or chest tightness.

IDENTIFICATION

Hexamine is a white, crystalline (sand-like) solid or powder with a mild Ammonia

odor. It is used in adhesives, coatings, sealing compounds, dyes, rubber, resins, oils, in the manufacture of explosives, and in medications and antiseptics.

REASON FOR CITATION

- Hexamine is on the Hazardous Substance List because it is cited by DOT.

HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION Chronic Health Effects

The following chronic (long-term) health effects can occur at some time after exposure to Hexamine and can last for months or years:

Cancer Hazard

- There is no evidence that Hexamine causes cancer in animals. This is based on test results presently available to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services from published studies.
- Hexamine may cause mutations (genetic changes).

Reproductive Hazard

- Hexamine may damage the developing fetus.

Other Long-Term Effects

- Hexamine may cause a skin allergy. If allergy develops, very low future exposure can cause itching and a skin rash.
- Hexamine may cause an asthma-like allergy. Future exposure can cause asthma attacks with shortness of breath, wheezing, cough, and/or chest tightness.

MEDICAL

Medical Testing

If symptoms develop or overexposure is suspected, the following are recommended:

- Evaluation by a qualified allergist, including careful exposure history and special testing, may help diagnose skin allergy.
- Lung function tests. These may be normal if the person is not having an attack at the time of the test. Any evaluation should include a careful history of past and present symptoms with an exam. Medical tests that look for damage already done are not a substitute for controlling exposure. Request copies of your medical testing.

You have a legal right to this information under OSHA 1910.1020.

Mixed Exposures

- Because smoking can cause heart disease, as well as lung cancer, emphysema, and other respiratory problems, it may worsen respiratory conditions caused by chemical exposure. Even if you have smoked for a long time, stopping now will reduce your risk of developing health problems.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: If I have acute health effects, will I later get chronic health effects?

A: Not always. Most chronic (long-term) effects result from repeated exposures to a chemical.

Q: Can I get long-term effects without ever having short-term effects?

A: Yes, because long-term effects can occur from repeated exposures to a chemical at levels not high enough to make you immediately sick. Q: What are my chances of getting sick when I have been exposed to chemicals?

A: The likelihood of becoming sick from chemicals is increased as the amount of exposure increases. This is determined by the length of time and the amount of material to which someone is exposed.

Q: When are higher exposures more likely?

A: Conditions which increase risk of exposure include dust releasing operations and "confined space" exposures

Q: What are the likely health problems from chemicals which cause mutations?

A: There are two primary health concerns associated with mutagens: (1) cancers can result from changes induced in cells and, (2) adverse reproductive and developmental outcomes can result from damage to the egg and sperm cells.

Q: Can men as well as women be affected by chemicals that cause reproductive system damage?

A: Yes. Some chemicals reduce potency or fertility in both men and women. Some damage sperm and eggs, possibly leading to birth defects.

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Election of Association Officers

If you would like to run for a position on the Board of Directors of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association, you will need to submit your name and desired position. Elections will be held during the business meeting of the reunion in Charleston, SC. Positions available are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and four director chairs. You must be a member in good standing to run for office. All who want to be considered for election must submit the request in writing to: CWO4 Robert Embesi, PO Box 228, Connor, MT 59827 no later than July 01, 2009. If you have a question you may call the Nomination Committee Chair, CWO4 Robert Embesi for details at 406-821-3075 (MST).

Historical Foundation Launches Blog

Ray Stewart, President of the Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation recently announced the establishment of the MCVTHF Historical Blog site, mcvthf.blogspot.com.

The site is intended for members of our association to be able to post your accounts of various combat actions or other individual stories you might want to submit.

The blog is easy to use. Simply click on a Topic and type in the information you want to submit. If you have already written something on your computer you can cut and paste the item. Next, go to the login in portion of the blog. You will click on Name/Url and type in your name. Finally, you will click on Publish your comment. You're done.

If there is not a Topic listed on the Blog in which you want to submit your information simply go to the Topic: General Comments and ask that a Topic be created for your particular information. Once the Topic appears you can submit you information.

If you have question please email: mcvthf@gmail.com

Coming Home

BY LLOYD G. “PAPPY” REYNOLDS
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In December 1967, my platoon had moved from the “Rockpile” to Camp Carroll. I had already served 12 months in country and was due to go home in the next coming weeks. I actually thought about extending my tour so I went to see the First Sergeant. I no sooner got there than I was called out on a sweep. Some sweep— we walked into a real hornet’s nest. When I returned to the Company CP, the First Sergeant asked me if I still wanted to extend.

“Hell No!” I said.

About this time, some of the tankers who had come over on ship with me were getting their orders to rotate back to the states but I had yet to see mine. So, I went back to the First Sergeant. The next thing I know I am issued orders to report to Third Tank Battalion HQ to see the Sergeant Major. It was then I got my orders to go home.

I was soon off to Okinawa and now I’m thinking I’m on my way home— but not so fast! When I had re-enlisted to go to Vietnam in October 1966, I got orders to report to Staging Battalion at Camp Pendleton where I was told they had no uniforms for me and was promptly issued a set of “Whites” and put on Mess Duty until I could get my proper clothing.

Everyday I checked in at the company office to see about uniforms. One day I’m in there and the Gunny hollers at me “Hey! Marine! Where in hell do you think you are— the Horse Marines?” At this point the reader has to understand the predicament I was in, for I had just served with the Old Horse Marines from China (4th Marines) but I didn’t even have any issued shoes— and I was wearing the only pair of cowboy boots I owned! So naturally I told the Gunny that I did serve with the Horse Marines— and that’s when the fun started. He kind of went high and to the right. He dragged me over to supply where they produced enough khaki’s, boots and utilities to get me to Vietnam.

Now, 12 months later, I’m on Okinawa trying to get back to “The World” and all I have is khakis. Unfortunately the uniform of the day is, “Greens”! I soon find out that cash sales didn’t have any Greens nor did the PX, so I began begging other Marines for any scrap of clothing they could give up. Finally I was able to scrounge up a set of Greens from a half dozen people. Naturally, none of the clothes fit but I was on my way home.

I caught a military flight from San Francisco to El Toro, which is conveniently only thirty miles from home. By the way, my parents had no idea I was coming home! After getting through customs, I took a cab to my hometown of Arcadia, CA. I got out of the cab and walked up to the front door only to find my parents weren’t home— and I’m locked out!

I still had to pay the cab driver but he didn’t have any small bills to make change with so we drove over to a liquor store where I bought a bottle of Southern Comfort and got the change I needed. The cab dropped me off back home and I am left outside with a bottle of whiskey and an open garage. It is 2100 on a weeknight and I’m already half splattered when I decide to walk down the street and look for a house with a light on so I can use their phone. I wanted to call my ex-wife and see my daughter.

I find a house, explain my situation and make the call. She’s not home. The people who own the house tell me their son is in the Army and in Vietnam and had just been wounded a few days earlier. The father and I swap war stories and we share some of his liquor. When I finally stagger back to my parent’s house, I find my folks are home. I find my seabag in my room with the half-bottle of Southern Comfort on top along with a, “Welcome Home Son” sign. That’s when I passed out.

The next day I had a good breakfast before both of my folks had to go off to work. I clean up my act and try again to call the ex-wife but I get the ex-mother-in-

law instead and get a long song and dance (that’s another story).

That night I figure I’ll go out and have a few. I put on my (ill-fitting) Greens and do the town. I borrow my father’s car, and off I go. I hit a few bars and there is nothing exciting until I hit this one place where everyone starts buying me drinks. Wow! This is for me! After a while I go in the back where there they had a pool table. I get in a game and this one guy who say’s he’s a Marine (Reserve). After some talking, things just didn’t sound right; his answers didn’t ring true. I had a few more drinks and finally left, but as I’m driving home, I notice a car is following me. I turn down the street my parent’s house is on and the car is still behind me. I sped up and the other car turned off his lights! I pulled in behind my parent’s house, ran inside and got my pistol. I ran back outside and hid in the bushes just as he pulled up in front of the house— with his lights still off. He got out of the car and came across the street to the edge of the driveway. I am hiding in the bushes next to the house and thinking, “Two more steps and you get three, center mass”. But the guy just stood there for what seemed like forever but was actually only a minute or two. He then turned and went back to his car. To this day I don’t know if he was just trying to see if I got home safe, or just maybe wanted to talk with me, or meant to harm me. All I know is that he was just about two pounds of trigger pull away from being ventilated. I’m glad he walked away.

Two nights later my parent’s took a female friend and me out to dinner. They wanted to go to a place in Hollywood. They had requested that I wear my uniform, ill-fitting as it was. We had a good dinner and as we were leaving the restaurant when a hippie-type kid comes up to me begging for money. I told him to shove off and get a job. The asshole then calls me a baby killer and spits at me! Suddenly I had him by the

(Continued on page 23)

The Ultimate Question

BY ROBERT PEAVEY

With all the books written about Albert Einstein in the last year, not to mention several television documentaries, the deluge of all this theoretical physics resulted in my having a flashback to a problem posed to a group of wide-eyed rookies back at Del Mar. It seems that our humble tank poses a problem ranking right up there with, “Are we alone?” and “Will the universe keep on expanding or will it contract?”

This unique phenomenon resides in every tank park on the planet and for some has become the, “ultimate question”: How can a body be at rest and part of it is still moving at the same time?

This question, first posed by a staff sergeant in Tank School, must have been gnawing all these years in the back of my mind to have it suddenly burst through into my conscious 40 years later. I’m certain it is a problem of vast complexity that must still remain unanswered: If a tank is going 30 mph . . . how fast is the track going?

Now, before you scream out your answer, which I guarantee will be wrong, I suggest

a little experiment as Einstein himself would have done. But instead of imagining trains moving at the speed of light, picture a tank as it drives across your field of view from right to left. You are the observer with a radar gun in hand. You clock the tank traveling at exactly 30mph. This much is an undisputable fact that can be repeated by any observer.

But here comes the theoretical bullshit that can drive one crazy, which I can only thank a nameless staff sergeant for. Point the radar gun at the track which is on the ground as the tank moves across your field of view and take a reading. The radar gun won’t register anything for the track on the ground is not moving. Yet, tip the gun up to the same track running over the support rollers and the radar gun will register 30MPH! How can that be? How can a solid object be both stationary and moving at the same time? Impossible! And yet . . . there it is.

Next issue I take on the meaning of life. ♦

Coming Home
(Continued from page 22)

stacking swivel with one hand and his ass with the other, propelling him towards a store window. If it hadn’t been for the bear hug my father put on me, the kid would have gone through the window. The last I saw of him he was running down the street holding his neck and cussing me.

The rest of my leave was uneventful. I finally got orders to report to Fifth MP Battalion at Camp Pendleton— can you imagine me an MP? The day I drove on base to check in, I get a ticket for running a stop sign from a base MP! This is not a good way to start this new job, but the damned sign was hidden behind a tree and couldn’t be seen!

After checking in with the “Skipper”, I asked if he could fix the ticket for me? He said, “Fix it yourself, Sergeant Reynolds.” So I did.

I have no idea what they would have done to me had they caught me cuttin’ that tree down. But it looked nice laying in the road.

WELCOME HOME MARINE. ♦

Hexamine Tablets
(Continued from page 21)

Q: Who is at the greatest risk from reproductive hazards?

A: Pregnant women are at greatest risk from chemicals that harm the developing foetus. However, chemicals may affect the ability to have children, so both men and women of childbearing age are at high risk.

The following information is available from: New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Occupational Health Service
PO Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360
(609) 984-1863
(609) 292-5677 (fax)
Web address:
<http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/odisweb/>

♦

Author unknown
Found in the pocket of a dead Marine in Quang Tri province, Vietnam.
7 June, 1969
Submitted by: Doug Scrivner

WHO WERE YOU WITH?

BY WILLIAM R. MILLER

A few years ago I was strolling with my wife through a fall festival in a small Kansas town. I was wearing a red ball cap with an eagle, globe, and anchor logo on the front. I noticed another man with a similar hat as he passed us in the crowd. He stopped, turned to me, and said, “Who were you with?”

“1st Marine Aircraft Wing, MASS Duce [Marine Air Support Squadron 2], Dong Ha on the DMZ [demilitarized zone], ‘68–‘69. You?” I answered without thinking.

“2/5 [2d Battalion, 5th Marines], Hue City , Tet ‘68, Semper fi,” he said and walked on.

“Who was that?” my wife asked. “Just another Marine,” I said. Just another Marine, what an understatement I thought.

At other times that day, I saw a cruise jacket, a sweatshirt, and two more ball caps all representing the Marine Corps. I saw the emblems of no other Service. Since then I have become more aware, and I have noted that I see Marine Corps bumper stickers and rear window decals, not Army. I see Marine Corps flags outside homes, not Air Force. And I see Marine caps and jackets, seldom Navy.

I started counting, and I actually see about 20 Marine symbols to each display of the other Armed Forces. Yet, the Marine Corps is still the smallest of the Services. Could it be that “once a Marine, always a Marine” is true? Could it be that there is a greater pride in having been one of the few?

For the last 5 years I, too, have asked the question, “Who were you with?” I have always gotten an answer; no one has ever asked, “What do you mean?” Marines understand the question. A few times the ball cap has represented a son or daughter. But even their parents know the units with whom their children are serving. The pride of their being with the Marines is also in the parents.

This year, at the same festival, I met four Marines. One young man said he spent the Marine Corps birthday, 10 November 2004, in Fallujah with 1/3; the second had

helped the 2d Marine Division take Kuwait City in 1991; and the third served with me in Vietnam, only farther south at Chu Lai in 1970. But the one that I remember the most was the man in a worn, faded cruise jacket, walking slowly with a cane, and being passed by the crowd.

I walked to his side, slowed to his pace, and asked, “Who were you with?” He stopped, turned, stood up straight, and looked me in the eye. “5th Marine Division, Iwo Jima , 1945,” he said. A chill went through me and I knew I was in the presence of a history maker. “Thank you,” I said. He smiled and said, “You?” As we talked I told him that I had been an air control officer in Vietnam and that my son had just completed three tours in Iraq with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 2. Then before I knew it, he was thanking me. He continued to tell me how much harder it is today to tell who the enemy is and how much he admires our young Marines.

Today I teach biology at Baker University in Kansas , and I often tell my students that they have not yet had history happen to them. They do not remember Pearl Harbor or know what happened at the Chosin Reservoir or even where to find Con Thien on a map. At times I get to tell them about Marines whom I have met and the history they helped make. But still it is hard for them to understand what an injured Army captain I met on China Beach meant when he told me, “The most beautiful sight in the world is a Marine F–4 rolling in hot with snake and nape.”

These events are not just part of history; they are history. Had their results been different, the world would be different. “Who were you with?” says more than, “Where were you when . . . ?” or “What were you doing when . . . ?” It says participant not spectator. It says Marine.

So the next time you see an eagle, globe, and anchor on a hat or shirt pocket ask the simple question, “Who were you with?” Listen to the answer of a unit, a place, and

a time and think about that moment in history. But more than that, listen to the pride saying, “I am a Marine.”

Editor’s note:
Dr. Miller served with the 1st MAW, Marine Air Control Group 18, MASS–2 in Vietnam from 1968–69. He is currently working in the Department of Biology, Baker University, Baldwin City, KS.

*What is it about you...
(Continued from page 18)*

in the Corps. The Corps is your family, you can never leave, and you are always welcome back. You are EXPECTED to come back!

This shared experience, and personal sacrifice is our common bond. It is why we love each other and our country so much, and why we cling to our traditions. Our celebration preserves and honors the memory of all who have gone before us and it is an example, and a standard, for all who follow. In a time when there are so few proud and good examples to follow, when so little seems to count, our views, our beliefs, our PRACTICE of our tradition is, by others standards, EXTREME. We are perhaps all our country has left to guarantee that the principles upon which this nation was founded will survive.

Many presidents, and congressmen, have tried to do away with the Marine Corps, but we are still here. Why? The answer is simple - America doesn’t need a Marine Corps, America WANTS one! Marine, you are the reason she feels that way. Remember that, and feel good about it.

(Cpl) Doug Scrivner
USMC 1967-1970 Semper Fi
RVN 68-69
BLT 2/7 B & C Co. 1st Tanks
(Zippo) 1st Mar.Div. ♦

THE MAGIC OF “A FEW GOOD MEN”

BY W. THOMAS SMITH, JR
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2006

Such events throughout Corps history have contributed to an ethos matched only by the most elite military organizations in the world.

“A LITTLE DANGEROUS”
Yet “a Marine Corps for the next 500 years” has not always been the wish of every member of the Marines’ sister services, some of whom have harbored a distaste for Marines perhaps stemming from envy, a desire for the same reputation, or competition for Defense budget dollars (the latter of which the Corps has always come in last). In fact, there have been efforts albeit unsuccessful to have the Corps either disbanded or absorbed into either the Army or Navy. Even after the Marines’ stunning performance in World War II, Army Gen. Frank Armstrong proposed in the late 1940’s absorbing Marines into the Army, and referred to the Corps as “a small bitched-up army talking Navy lingo.”

Decades later, in 1997, Assistant Secretary of the Army Sara Lister proclaimed before a Harvard University audience, “I think the Army is much more connected to society than the Marines are. Marines are extremists. Wherever you have extremists, you’ve got some risks of total disconnection with society. And that’s a little dangerous.”

But there has been much more expressed respect, than criticism, from the Corps’ counterparts: “The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle.”— U.S. Army Gen. John J. “Black Jack” Pershing
“The safest place in Korea was right behind a platoon of Marines. Lord, how they could fight!”— U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Frank Lowe

“Marines have it [pride] and benefit from it. They are tough, cocky, sure of themselves and their buddies. They can fight, and they know it.”— U.S. Army Gen. Mark Clark
“Marines I see as two breeds, Rottweilers

In his latest book, America’s Victories - Why the U.S. wins wars and will win the war on terror, national defense and economics historian Dr. Larry Schweikart describes the performance of U.S. troops during the 2003 invasion of Iraq: “The Marines, given their superiority in combat training and despite their youth (Marines are the youngest, on average, of the enlisted troops) generally fared far better than the regular Army in combat situations,” he writes.

It’s not a statement that would necessarily endear Dr. Schweikart to Army officers. But right or wrong, U.S. Marines do indeed have a reputation for combat prowess that often surpasses the reputations of other military organizations – even the really good ones. And this rep has fueled the interservice rivalry that has existed since the birth of the Corps on November 10, 1775 – exactly 231 years ago, today.

Born in an old Philadelphia alehouse, with the barkeep as its first officer, the fledgling Continental Marine Corps was composed of a motley band of adventurers and street toughs; nothing like the 178,000-plus elite U.S. Marine Corps we know today. But somewhere along the way the proverbial formula was discovered.. According to tradition – and in Lt. Gen. Victor H. “Brute” Krulak’s book, First to Fight – Marines started telling themselves they were the best.. They started believing it, and they’ve been busy proving it ever since.

“THE MAGIC”
Best-selling author Tom Clancy refers to the result of this formula as magic. “Marines are mystical,” he once wrote. “They have magic ... [a magic that] may well frighten potential opponents more than the actual violence Marines can generate in combat.”

Indeed, this magic has been working to America’s benefit as a force multiplier in both peace and war for decades.

During the Korean War, for instance, Chinese premier Mao Tse Tung was so concerned about the combat prowess of the 1st Marine Division that he put out a death contract on the entire division, which he stated, “has the highest combat effectiveness” of any division in the U.S. armed forces. “It seems not enough for our four divisions to surround and annihilate [the 1st Marine Division’s] two regiments,” Mao said in orders to the commander of the 9th Chinese Army Group. “You should have one or two more divisions as a reserve force.” During the same war, a captured North Korean officer confessed, “Panic sweeps my men when they are facing the American Marines.”

The Marines didn’t earn their reputation overnight. Many military historians would argue as to where, when, and in what specific combat-action the Corps’ rep was actually solidified.

Some might point to Lt. Presley O’Bannon’s successful 1805 expedition across several-hundred miles of North African desert to attack the Tripolitan city of Derna, where the U.S. flag was raised for the first time in the “old world.”

Others might point to the famous 1847 storming of Mexico’s Chapultepec Castle, the so-Christened “Halls of Montezuma.”

Still others might point to the First World War battle of Belleau Wood, in which bayonet-wielding Marines – led by a grizzled old Gunnery Sergeant Dan Daly who rallied his men with, “Come on you sons of bitches, do you want to live forever?!” – successfully assaulted a line of German machine-gun nests in 1918.

And most would agree in spirit with Navy Secretary James Forrestal, who, from an offshore ship witnessed the famous flag-raising over Iwo Jima in 1945, said, “The raising of that flag on [Mount] Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.”

The Magic...
(Continued from page 25)

or Dobermans, because Marines come in two varieties, big and mean, or skinny and mean. They're aggressive on the attack and tenacious on defense. They've got really short hair and they always go for the throat." — Rear Admiral Jay Stark, U.S. Navy

"[U.S.] Marines have the swagger, confidence, and hardness that must have been in Stonewall Jackson's Army of the Shenandoah." — A British military officer in a report to his command after visiting U.S. Marines in Korea

"FACTORS THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE"

Some praise, because of interservice rivalry, has been either conservatively guarded or incidental.

U.S. Army Gen. William C. Westmoreland, who commanded all American military forces in Vietnam and later served as Army chief of staff, stated flatly he "admired the élan of Marines."

During the 1983 invasion of Grenada, Army Gen. John W. Vessey Jr., then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, picked up a telephone and demanded to know why "two companies of Marines [are] running all over the island and thousands of Army troops [are] doing nothing. What the hell is going on?"

James Adams, former CEO of United Press International, described in his book, *Secret Armies*, "Marines with 20 percent of the [American] force ended up occupying 80 percent of the island [Grenada]"

The reputation and performance of Marines stems from several factors beyond simply the aforementioned formula of

first boasting, then believing, and forever proving:

First, the Marine Corps is the smallest of the four traditional American armed forces. It is organized as a separate arm of service, but officially exists as a quick-reaction combined-arms amphibious force under the Department of the Navy. And as I wrote in *National Review Online* back in 2004, "the Corps' philosophical approach to training and combat differs from other branches. Marine boot camp —more of a rite-of-passage than a training program— is the longest and toughest recruit indoctrination program of any of the military services. Men and women train separately. All Marines from private to Commandant are considered to be first-and-foremost riflemen. And special-operations units in the Marines

(Continued on next page)

The Magic...
(Continued from page 26)

are not accorded the same respect as they are in other branches. The Marines view special operations as simply another realm of warfighting. Marines are Marines, and no individual Marine or Marine unit is considered more elite than the other."

"ANGELS OF DEATH"

Ask any former Marine (Marines are never ex-Marines): Being a Marine is something more akin to a tribal religious experience than simply a hitch in the service. As a consequence, brand-new boot Marines are convinced of their superiority — justified or not — over other soldiers. Other soldiers often view this self-perception as unjustifiable arrogance. But none of this is to suggest that the individual Marine is a better man (or today, woman) than any American soldier, sailor, or airman currently serving around the globe. All American servicemen are "good." They all bring unique skill-sets to the table, and they are all working together better than ever.

But since we are talking about the Marine Corps — on the 231st anniversary of its founding — the question remains: just how effective is the combat prowess of America's Marines?

Terrifyingly effective if you were to believe Saddam Hussein's soldiers, who in 1991 dubbed U.S. Marines, "Angels of Death," and whose senior commanders deployed 100,000 Iraqi troops behind the Iraqi-Kuwaiti beaches in to one administrator or supplier. As a result, the Marine Corps delivers the most firepower in the quickest time when responding to a crisis. ... The Marine Corps' greatest advantage over other services is the speed and muscle with which it can respond to a crisis."

Still, from a combat-power / force-multiplying perspective, it is the old formula — which creates the magic — that truly sets Marines apart from other soldiers. Perhaps impossible to define, this magic may be expressed in the words of a frantic terrorist whose radio transmission was intercepted by U.S. forces during the assault on Fallujah in 2004: "We are fighting, but the Marines keep coming. We are shooting, but the Marines won't stop."

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WHAT MEMBERS ARE DOING

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2008, I was inducted into the Madison County Hall of Hero's. The Hall of Hero's is comprised of Madison County residents who have been recognized for valor while serving in combat. The information used for my induction is located at www.mcmhc.org; click on Bio's; click on 2008. There were 4 inductees this year. If you need any

additional information, let me know.

If you find this information appropriate for the USMC VTA or USMCVTHF, sites or newsletters, please include it as you deem appropriate.

Have a great holiday season.

Semper Fi.

Peter J. Ritch

This is a picture of ABC Television "All My Children" star Aiden Turner who plays Aiden Devane on the show & my gal, Sandy. She did a screen test and was hired immediately. They need a guy to play a janitor. Maybe me, I hope. Rats!! No love scenes playing a janitor.

Bye bye Falls Church, Va., hello Hollywood!

Fred Cruz

703-876-1666

fcruz@cox.net



Hope all had a good holiday. I think you "early 3rd Herders" started the tradition of the crew member next to rotate would buy a flag and fly it from the antenna. This is mine. My wife put it in a picture frame one day to surprise me. I was! The names are the guys I was close to during that time. We all just clicked.

Ron Davidson

815-627-9150

Ron@VIPProducts.net

My wife Carol went in to the shopping center tonight, the license plate on my car & truck have the RVN flag & Marine Corps emblem on them. When she came out she found the attached note on the windshield.

(Cpl) Doug Scrivner

USMC 1967-1970 Semper Fi RVN 68-69

513-887-6266

docascriv@fuse.net

Dear Vietnam Veteran -
Thank you for your service!
Merry Christmas and Semper Fi!
A Marine Wife

NAME THAT TANK

Always breaking new ground, the Sponson Box offers a new feature that defies readers to identify the country of origin and the model of a given tank. Prizes galore will be awarded including unimaginable gifts given to the winner with no expense spared.

Grand Prize: One 11-inch embroidered USMC VTA patch, which are currently unavailable, making this prize, "priceless".



Looks a little familiar? ID this tank and win a "priceless" gift.

Pisstube Encounter
(Continued from page 14)

dry while performing Number 1... these officers had thought of everything!

As I stepped onto the platform, I learned my first combat lesson to always expect the unexpected as I plummeted into a 55-gallon drum of lye and urine. What appeared to be a cement platform was actually a mesh screen and the “pisstube” was actually an acration device. With my platoon introduction the next morning, I was now submerged to my waist in urine and toxic chemicals. After extricating myself from the barrel, I was pleased to see that my accident lacked witnesses as everybody had returned to their respective hooches following the alert. I luckily found some outside shower where I was able to wash my quick-drying utilities

and attempt to cleanse by leather boots. The next morning I avoided breakfast, due to the foul miasma emanating from my boots, and was introduced to my platoon wearing wet boots that still smelled of urine and lye. Luckily, the quartermaster provided me with jungle boots in the afternoon and I was able to “deep-six” the incriminating evidence. I had suffered from athlete’s foot fungus since playing HS football. Miraculously, the upside of my encounter with the pisstube had cured this long-standing ailment apparently due to the daylong immersion in urine and lye soaked boots.

After leaving the Marine Corps, I later learned that soaking your feet in urine was a traditional off-brand cure for foot fungus... I recommend that readers try this at home. Later in my tour, I would also have additional scatological adventures while burning the crappers. I would learn to be careful when emptying

the residue and in avoiding inhaling the black smoke. Once while visiting battalion, I was sitting on the 3-holer reading a magazine (Leatherneck?) when the Colonel entered. I was torn between choices of proper etiquette. Do I stand and salute? Do I jump up and “essentially moon” the CO while trying to egress or do I remain and chitchat with the CO and wait until he has finished “his business”? I chose a quick salutation and exit. These matters are never satisfactorily covered in OCS during the “What Now Lieutenant” series. The conclusion of this short story is that although I didn’t intentionally wet my pants during my first combat encounter, the result was the same. It has taken me 30 years to get this confession of my chest and I hope that readers will absolve me of my miscalculation and chock it up to being a both a brown-bar and FNG. ♦

VA Secretary Establishes ALS as a Presumptive Compensable Illness September 23, 2008

Cites Association between Military Service and Later Development of ALS
WASHINGTON – Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive badly-needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military.

“Veterans are developing ALS in rates higher than the general population, and it was appropriate to take action,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake said.

Secretary Peake based his decision primarily on a November 2006 report by the National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the association between active-duty service and ALS.

“We are extremely grateful to Secretary Peake, Congressman Henry Brown and Senator Lindsey Graham for standing on the side of veterans with ALS across the country,” said Gary Leo, president and CEO of The ALS Association. “Thanks to their leadership, veterans with ALS will receive the benefits and care they need, when they need them. Thanks to their efforts, no veteran with ALS will ever be left behind.”

The report, titled Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature, analyzed numerous previous studies on the issue and concluded that “there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS.”

“ALS is a disease that progresses rapidly, once it is diagnosed,” the Secretary explained. “There simply isn’t time to develop the evidence needed to support compensation claims before many veterans become seriously ill. My decision will make those claims much easier to process, and for them and their families to receive the compensation they have earned through

VA Info

their service to our nation.”

ALS, also called Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a neuromuscular disease that affects about 20,000 to 30,000 people of all races and ethnicities in the United States, is often relentlessly progressive, and is almost always fatal.

ALS causes degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that leads to muscle weakness, muscle atrophy, and spontaneous muscle activity. Currently, the cause of ALS is unknown, and there is no effective treatment.

The new interim final regulation applies to all applications for benefits received by VA on or after September 23, 2008, or that are pending before VA, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on that date.

VA will work to identify and contact veterans with ALS, including those whose claims for ALS were previously denied, through direct mailings and other outreach programs.

To view the entire regulation published in the Federal Register today, go to: www.federalregister.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2008-21998_PI.pdf. For more information on VA’s disability compensation program, go to www.va.gov or contact 1-800-827-1000.

People wishing to receive e-mail from VA with the latest news releases and updated fact sheets can subscribe to the VA Office of Public Affairs Distribution List.

VA PRESUMPTIVE VIETNAM VET DISEASES

The Department of Veterans Affairs presumes that specific disabilities diagnosed in certain veterans were caused by their military service. If one of these conditions is diagnosed in Vietnam Vet, VA presumes that the circumstances of his/her service (i.e. exposure to Agent Orange) caused the condition, and disability compensation can be awarded. This includes DIC education and CHAMPVA for spouses of veterans rated 100% or surviving spouses late-veterans that died from discussed medical

problems. The following disabilities may be presumed for those who served in the Republic of Vietnam between 1/9/62 and 5/7/75:

- chloracne or other acneform disease similar to chloracne*
- porphyria cutanea tarda*
- soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma or mesothelioma)
- Hodgkin’s disease
- multiple myeloma
- respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea)
- non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- prostate cancer
- acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy*
- type 2 diabetes
- chronic lymphocytic leukemia

Note*: Must become manifest to a degree of 10% or more within a year after the last date on which the veteran was exposed to an herbicide agent during active military, naval, or air service.

[Source: County of Humboldt Veterans Service office 12 Oct 08 ++]

VA DIABETES MELLITUS CARE UPDATE

The occurrence of Type 2, or adult onset, diabetes is increasing, particularly for the Vietnam Era veteran. For veterans of Vietnam, there is a statistically higher incidence of Type 2 diabetes. Because of this, the Veterans Affairs Department declared a link between Vietnam service and the disease. This means that if you have served in Vietnam and now have Type 2 diabetes, you are eligible for service-connected disability compensation and health care connected with this condition through the VA. The term “service in Vietnam” means that at some time between 9 JAN 62, and 7 MAY 75, you were in Vietnam. Service in the waters offshore or in the air does not qualify you unless during that time you set foot in Vietnam and have some way to prove it. For most veterans who served in Vietnam, their service is clearly shown on their separation papers, the DD-214.

E-mail Warning!

The below email was received by myself and a number of other vets who are asking if it is legitimate. A review of the website provided in the message revealed that it contains a number of veteran related informational items but does not provide any information on who the owner/sponsors of this site are or any background that would attest to the legitimacy of the site. Since this web site ends in dot.com vice dot.gov it is not a government site and could possibly be a scam to get personal information. Readers are advised to exercise caution before providing any personal information or records.

“HOUSTON , TX (October 21, 2008) In order to alleviate the strain on the National Personnel Records Commission (NPRC), and Veterans Affairs (VA), U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs introduced today that veterans can permanently store their service medical records (SMR), legal records, or military records in their new, user-friendly, Records Archive Division (RAD). <http://www.veteranprograms.com>”
[Source: CA DVBE Advocate Ted Puntillo msg 3 Nov 08 ++]

If you went to boot camp at Parris Island, SC:

Platoon Photos
Platoon photos dating back to 1939 are available through Recruit Photo by calling (843) 228-1555.

If you went to boot camp at San Diego, CA:

Platoon Photos
To purchase Platoon Grad photos, please visit the Marine Corps Community Service website:
<http://www.mcrdmuseumhistoricalsociety.org/histsoc/histsoc-photos.htm>

CAMP LEJEUNE TOXIC EXPOSURE UPDATE

The Marine Corps is searching for at least 500,000 people who have visited Camp Lejeune, NC, and could be at risk for health problems due to the drinking water on base. Chemicals from a building used to wash clothes for dry cleaning and de-greasing were found in the water system.

More than 80,000 people have registered, which is only a fraction of the veterans and visitors who could be affected.

Those who have visited or lived on the base between 1957 and 1987 should register by visiting the Marine Corps’ Camp LeJeune Water Study website

<https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clsurvey/>
or by calling (877) 261-9782.
[Source: NAUS Weekly Update 26 Nov 08 ++]

If you have qualifying service, you should obtain a statement from your treating doctor that you are currently being treated for the disease. The more detail you provide, the easier it will be for the VA to handle your claim, so try to get a copy of your treatment records for the past year. A successful claim could entitle you to monetary compensation and treatment for your diabetes. The evaluation will be assessed through a VA examination, during which a VA doctor will evaluate your current condition. The VA will then assign an evaluation through the rating process. The evaluation could be as little as zero percent disabling to 100% disabling, which would result in monthly compensation for your condition. Service connection can also be granted for secondary conditions directly related to the diabetes,

for example, diabetic retinopathy. Once service connection has been established, you can reopen your claim if the condition progresses or other secondary conditions are discovered. In addition, if service connection is established, you are entitled to care for this condition at any VA medical facility. Medical care includes prescription drugs required to treat the condition. Both the medical care and prescription drugs are provided without cost for veterans service connected for the condition. If you've never filed a claim with the VA before, or you know someone who may benefit from this information, contact your local Veterans Service office. [Source: The treasure coast Palm Paul Hiott article 1 Nov 08 ++]

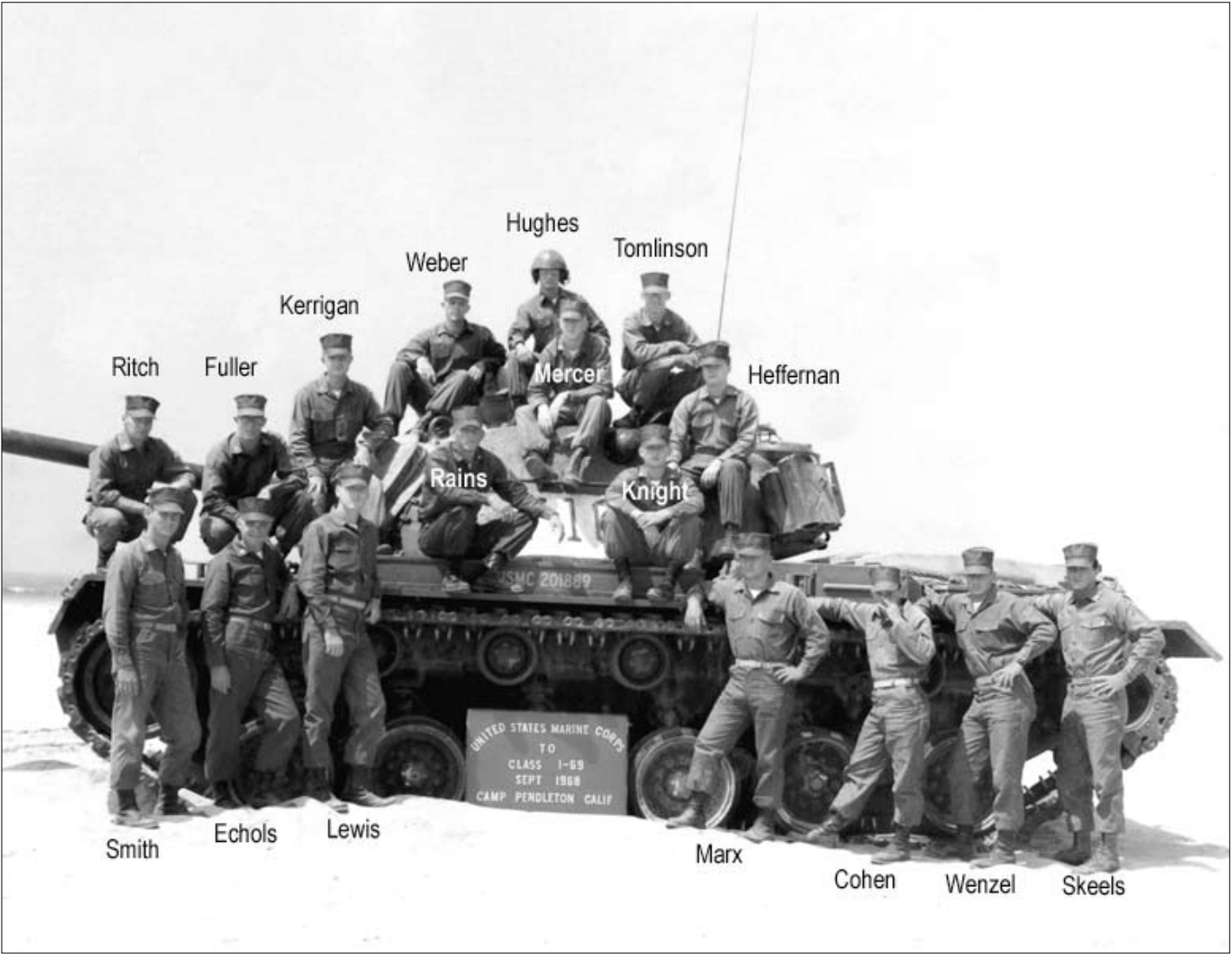
AGENT ORANGE & HEART DISEASE:

Scientists studying dioxin exposure in humans — including Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange — have found a correlation between the chemicals and the death rates of heart disease and

cardiovascular disease. The research, presented in Environmental Health Perspectives shows that there are consistent and significant dose-related associations with heart disease and modest associations with cardiovascular disease. Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Environmental Protection Agency said they realized that most dioxin studies had centered on cancer rates, but no one had produced a review of research about cardiovascular disease. "Future studies in both animals and humans should assess whether cardiovascular effects are present at environmentally relevant doses," the authors wrote. Environmental Health Perspectives' editor, Hugh Tilson, said the report is of interest because cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death in many countries, and dioxin exposure can be prevented. [Source: NavyTimes Kelly Kennedy article 21 Nov 08 ++] ♦



HM3 Marcus Preston assigned to HMM-163 aboard the USS Boxer is set to deploy Jan 8th with the 13th MEU. He is the grandson of Maj Roger U. Chaput USMC, Retired. Chaput served as a loader on Lt. G.G. Sweet's tank, (A31), in the famed 3d Plt., A Company, 1st Tank Bn. in Korea 1950-51.



Ron Knight's 1802 Tank Class - September 1968



USMC Vietnam Tankers Association

5537 Lower Mountain Road • New Hope, PA 18938

Please remember that your \$30 dues payment for 2009 was due two months ago.
If you are not current you will not receive the next issue.